

lowly. "She's kind of little and white, and scared-looking. She's—why, she's pitiful, in a way."

"Write the whole business, Kent," he said. "It's a corking good story. Give it an atmosphere. Put in that stuff you just told me, about her being white and scared. Give her the best end of it, if that's the way it is. We can't keep it out, but we'll give her a good show. You don't need to say she's homely." Haskins was making a concession. He could afford to be magnanimous, now that the story was his.

"All right," answered Kent. "I understand."

He began to write steadily again, his eyes upon the keys, although he did not seem to see them.

What Kent saw was a plain, wide, four-story brick house in an old-fashioned street, left undisturbed in an eddy of the current that rushed headling uptown, a place where the things of fifty years ago seemed to be still going round and round slowly, unable to escape into the swift stream that flowed restlessly by.

It was just as he expected to find it, inside. A maid let him into the dimly-lighted, high-ceilinged hall. There was a massive hat-rack, with marble top and mirror; a little table, with its tray for cards; carpets, soft and thick and somber. He had stepped upon a stage set with the scenery of half a century back. Nothing could have happened here since then.

A queer place for "news," he thought, his eyes roving. The maid had taken his card upstairs.

"Give it atmosphere," Haskins had said. Kent wrote steadily.

And then she had come, noiselessly, and stood hesitant in the curtained doorway that opened into the hall. She was holding his card, regarding him with inquiry, and, it seemed to Kent, apprehension. She was surely more than forty. If she was not absolutely old-fashioned, she was distinctly not modern. Not one of her features was good; if her face had

ever possessed a color it had faded years ago. But for all that it was a likable face.

She stood as if shrinking under his scrutiny, twisting and folding his card. Then, with a little inclination, of courtesy:

"You are Mr. Kent, I believe? Please keep your chair. I will sit over here."

She perched opposite, erect and precise, on a great armchair. She seemed like an old child. There was, some mistake, Kent felt, for the thing seemed impossible now; the story had taken him astray.

Kent was writing with minuteness, as he remembered it.

He had found it curiously hard to begin with this colorless creature, for what he wanted to say was absurdly incongruous. He explained it very plainly and briefly, and her eyes followed mechanically the movements of his lips. Then she nodded at him.

"Yes; that is true," she said. Her voice was low, monotonous, and flat. There was a queer docility in it.

"And the engagement had been announced?" Kent found that the words stumbled; her lack of resistance disconcerted him.

"Yes; to my friends—and some of his. I have only a few friends," she added. Her tone implied that he must know, of course.

She had acknowledged it with a frankness that Kent could not understand, and now she seemed to be waiting for him to go on, her eyes fixed wonderingly on his, like those of a dog waiting for command. It was hard to ask things; it was so easy to make her answer.

"Perhaps," he suggested, gently, "you would prefer to tell it in your own way."

"Yes; I—I think you are right. I think it would do me good to talk about it, if you would care to listen."

Kent was staring at her in astonishment. A protest leaped to his lips, but he forced it back. The "story"